

## *In Memoriam*



SOOD SANGVICHIEEN, 1907–1995

SOOD SANGVICHIEEN, M.D., Emeritus Professor of Anatomy, Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, was born on 29 November 1907 in Muang District, Samutprakan Province, south of Bangkok. His primary education was at Samutprakan School, while his secondary school and high school were at Suan Kularb College in Bangkok. He was accepted for medical school at Siriraj Hospital, from which he graduated in 1930, with his degree in medicine from Chulalongkorn University (at that time the Faculty of Medicine of Siriraj Hospital was a part of Chulalongkorn University). He received a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation to study anatomy at the University of Michigan and Western Reserve University from 1931 to 1933.

On his return to Thailand, he started teaching anatomy at Siriraj Hospital. In 1952 he was promoted to full professor at the hospital and in time became the head of the Department of Anatomy and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. He continued there until his retirement.

In 1962 he founded the Prehistoric Museum at the hospital, for which he continued to work even after his retirement. In 1963 he received a grant from the World Health Organization to study human genetics at Copenhagen University in Denmark. King Bhumipholadulayadej in 1972 visited the Prehistoric Museum and took part in an official opening of the museum.

He was a member of the Royal Institute of Thailand in the branch of Applied Science. From the institute he received the Gold Medal of Arts and many other royal decorations. He received honorary degrees from five different universities in Thailand. In 1983 he received the prestigious award from the Siriraj Medical Alumni as the best senior doctor, and in 1987 the Tarn Namjai Foundation recognized him as the Best Thai Citizen.

In 1988, from the Committee of the Thai Unique in the Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, he received an award for the best academic man in science and technology (anatomy). In 1990 the Committee of Thai Culture and Heritage gave him an award for his research in and protection of Thai culture and heritage.

He died early on the morning of Thursday, 8 June 1995 at the age of 88. After his death his body was donated to the Department of Anatomy for medical study. His skeleton and portions of his internal organs were preserved and are kept in a showcase and specimen boxes in the Congdon's Anatomical Museum, Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok.



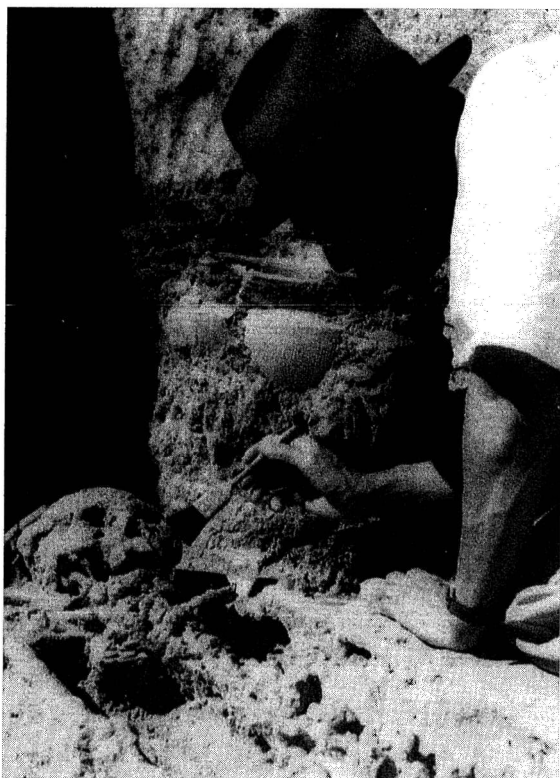
Pl. I. King Bhumipholadulayadej signing at the opening of the Sood Sangvichien Prehistoric Museum and Laboratory with Sood Sangvichien looking on.

#### THE SOOD SANGVICHIEEN PREHISTORIC MUSEUM AND LABORATORY

The Prehistoric Museum and Laboratory, named after Sood, is a part of the Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine of Siriraj Hospital. It was founded in 1962 and is located in the hospital compound. He wanted to develop this museum to teach the public and students about archaeology and to satisfy his own interest on the question "Where did the Thai people come from?" His research with excavated skeletal material and collections of prehistoric artifacts for his museum was in search of the answers to that question.

The first archaeological excavation of a prehistoric site following the end of the second World War was the joint Thai/Danish expedition, which worked along the Kwai Noi and Kwai Yai rivers in Kanchanaburi Province, western Thailand. One of the early test excavations at Ban Kao recovered two skeletons, with associated polished stone artifacts and earthenware pottery. Radiocarbon dating later indicated that these burials are about 4000 years old. Sood volunteered to work with the expedition on the skeletal remains, paying his own way. After spending portions of two years in the excavation, 39 skeletons were recovered and sent to Copenhagen. Later Sood was invited by the Danish National Museum to make a comparative study of these skeletons with modern Thai skeletons. He found no differences in the nonmetrical characteristics between the two groups of skeletons (Sood 1966; Sood et al. 1969).

It had long been accepted in Thailand that the origin of the Thai people was not in Thailand but somewhere in China (Sood 1966:234). In his 1966 article in



Pl. II. Sood Sangvichien at Ban Kao, Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand completing the excavation and recording of a prehistoric skeleton.

*Current Anthropology*, in the first statement about the skeletal material recovered from Ban Kao, Sood concludes, "Although more study is still needed before I can come to any definite conclusions, the findings so far seem to indicate that the present territory of Thailand was occupied by people with some characteristics not much different from those of the present Thai. Solheim has preceded me in concluding (1964) that there are numerous similarities and no important differences between the Neolithic population of Ban Kao and the present-day Thai. A conclusion to the contrary can only be based on further study." (See also Sood et al. 1969.)

I (W.G.S. II) felt that his giving me priority in that statement was an indication of Sood's kindness, and indeed greatness. He had no need to make reference to my statement in a Thai journal that at that time was virtually unknown outside of Thailand. Later (1966), in referring to an apparent pottery continuum indicated in our excavations in northeastern Thailand, I supported Sood's statement when I said "... it would suggest that the inhabitants of the area from the Neolithic to a hundred or so years ago were fundamentally the same people." From different databases, both of us were saying that the primary ancestry of the present-day Thai were in Thailand since at least late Neolithic times. I have felt very indebted to Sood since that time.

In 1965, Sood brought two of his students with him to record and complete the excavation of a number of skeletons we had left on pedestals at Non Nok

Tha in northeastern Thailand. We had been finding so many of these that we didn't have the time to excavate and record them carefully. Our locally employed excavators were very good at routine excavation but had no training in the detailed recording needed for the removal of the burials. Again, Sood paid all the attendant expenses out of his own pocket. In further research on this and other excavated skeletal material from Thailand, Sood and later his son were most helpful to Michael Pietrusewsky, our physical anthropologist at the University of Hawai'i.

He was a modest man, very easy to get along with, and very willing to share his data with others. He had a personal interest in the Mon-speaking people in Thailand. He had written a book on them in Thai, in which I (W.G.S. II) became very interested. He gave me a copy, which I had translated into English in hopes of publishing it in the United States. Unfortunately, I was unable to cope with the many plates in the book and it never went to press. I suspect that his interest in the Mon was the same as mine, which was that the Mon, who probably made up the primary population of Thailand before the entrance from the north of Thai aristocracy, were a major element—if not the primary element—in the ancestry of the present-day Thai.

Following his retirement, Sood was the director of and advisor to the museum, without payment. The museum had a hard struggle for its existence. It was largely ignored by the administration of the university, resulting, in part, in four moves before it found its permanent home. It is now on the ground floor of the Anatomy Building. Royal recognition of the museum has certainly helped. Besides the official opening at which the king took part, it has hosted official visits by Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn in 1967 and by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in 1989.

The museum is divided into two parts, the first presenting the evolution of the animal kingdom on earth and the second, human evolution starting with the primates and following with the cultural evolution of Asia, Southeast Asia, and Thailand as shown in artifacts. As a legacy of Sood's life, the museum continues its archaeological research by the two Thai authors of this obituary. Through the museum Sood and his research into the origins of the Thai will be remembered with appreciation and affection for many generations.

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